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The Associated Press

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When the press becomes the handmaiden of government it is as subversive as it can be in our society. Whether it does this by compulsion, as a whore or voluntarily, as a streetwalker, is immaterial for it is then a journalistic harlot.

This is perhaps the kindest thing I can say about the series of articles you labored so long and with such brilliant incompetence to finish, in which you think you pretend to defend either the government or the Warren Commission. You do neither. You make the possible defense impossible with such carefully-manufactured falsehood. And, aside from the dishonor you bring on our country and the evil you do by delaying the finally unveiling of the truth about the assassination, you soil your own nest, besmirch your own reputation, humiliate the members of the Associated Press in whose name you operate.

Whether that sycophantic scribbling by Bernard Geyzer and Sid Woody follows a doctrine that is theirs or yours is not material. The end is the same, further dishonor for the country and all involved.

I speak for no one but myself. Speaking for myself, your men made no effort to speak to me, in person, by phone or in writing. Once, by accident, I met Gavzer in the National Archives, where he wanted much of your time and money because he knew so little of what he was researching he didn't know what was in his hands as he read it, as you will in due course learn. He had suppressed evidence in his hand and didn't understand it, costing you what on any other story would have been a page-one story. At that time I offered to help him in any way I could. If anyone needed - and needs - help, it is Bernard Gavzer. Perhaps, today, he needs pity more for his has shamed a once-honorable calling.

After all, in any event, he stoops to a literary plagiarism in a futile effort to belittle me. Under the subhead "a motley of critics", well into his first piece he finds time to mention me, as "a Maryland poultryman". Not that it makes any difference if I am, for I was a professional writer as early as he and ever since with more integrity. Does the AP refer to General Eisenhower as a bull merchant, to the Governor of Michigan as a grease-monkey, or to the Governor of New York as a South American grocer or, perhaps, the descendant of a line of money-lenders, usurers and stock manipulators? If you doubt my claim, as you put it, about the good my efforts at foreign aid did the Peace Corps, let me know. From this piece I know the AP can not be trusted to search its own writings. It is you who broke the story, you who coined the name the project had. Again, it makes no difference. What I said and say about the assassination is right or wrong on the basis of fact, not your cheap, intended slanders.

I have published two books, you say, and on "planning a third". The slightest inquiry would have informed you that of my projected and researched work on this subject, really one large one, the third and fourth are completed and being published and the ~~fourth~~ fifth and sixth well under way, largely written.

Not that my work, the first, benefitted from treatment by the AP. In

early May 1968 you had an advance copy of the general printing of the first book. The story was written. It was killed on the desk. This is the fine impartiality of the Associated Press, of its devotion to fact, news and simple journalistic honor. Nonetheless, you also had a copy of the second. I acknowledge you are consistent, if you find this a good thing.

The method of your writers is simple. They alternate between and combine lies, part-truths, misrepresentations, misquotations and deliberate deceptions. If you find this harsh, if you feel it unjustified, then I challenge you to permit me an answer in the same format, with the same distribution. I will do what you did not: I will show you everything in advance and assure you of the integrity of the quotations. So hard did your incompetents have to strain that they refute themselves. For example, under "Conspiracy":

"The Warren Commission never said: Lee Harvey Oswald, alone, murdered John F. Kennedy, period."

But earlier, under "The Single-Bullet Theory":

"...It is central to these Commission conclusions...3. That all the shots were fired by Lee Harvey Oswald - and no other person."

On page 19, following 4, the report reads, quite directly and simply:

"The shots which killed President Kennedy and wounded Governor Connally were fired by Lee Harvey Oswald".

Your live with this kind of writing, sir. Fortunately, I do not.

In any event, I accuse you of deliberate misrepresentation, of fabrication and falsification, of misquotation - of deception. If you dispute me, good. Let us then have what has for so long been missing on what is so vital on a subject like this, a dialogue. We can use your wire or any form of your choosing. I will debate your writers and any others they chose to assist them, in writing or verbally. If you decline your wire, as I assume, let us then make this debate public, in front of the TV cameras and microphones. If you are so convinced I am a faker, let me offer you the opportunity to prove it to a larger audience.

Because your writers know so little of my writing, I will make it easier for them. I agree to restrict this debate or whatever form entirely to their own writing. On this, certainly, they are expert, on this they certainly know what they talk about.

Let us seek a determination of fact, entirely in public, and with equality on both sides. It is because I consider a debate against both avzer and Moody unfair to you and to them that I encourage you to enlist reinforcements. Your fiction retailed as fact says of the Commission staff lawyers, "they are now willing" to talk. This represents a change. Not one had debated me on their work or mine, and many have fled as I moved across the country, to avoid confrontation. Especially do I encourage you to have with them that pillar of the law, that boulder of the legal minds of the future, Wesley J. Liebeler, who said to your reporters (Why did they interview once side and not the other?), "The evidence that Oswald was able to shoot the President was that he did. He was lucky". I recognize that it is possible you may not be as impressed by Liebeler's fact and logic as your writers. In any event, I'd love to debate Liebeler. I went all the way to California to do

Sincerely,

it. Everywhere I went, expecting to find him, he was elsewhere. When finally I got to his home town, Los Angeles, and to a Sunday afternoon TV taping for which I had declined national exposure just to confront him, he suddenly found urgent need to be on the opposite side of the continent, working in the National Archives. Need I tell one as well-informed as the general manager of the Associated Press that the Archives is closed on Sundays?

Should you shun the humiliation of a mere chicken farmer exposing for all the world to see how dishonestly and incompetently the Associated Press writers, which I can understand, I offer then to do this in private for your benefit, either in person and alone or in your office face to face with your hirelings. I will prove to you, assuming you did not order this disgraceful thing you so widely distribute and with such great harm to me and others and to the national honor, that it is dishonest, damaging, and entirely wrong. Note I promise not to prove that it is a little bit wrong. I will show you the whole damned thing is.

Now we are on a basis of understanding. If you do not accept my challenges, you and I immediately will know it. In the future, scholars will, for my work will be available. There are those who have a better knowledge of it and a more dispassionate attitude than your links.

I close with the cheap beginning of your series, as quoted from the Washington Post. It seems that ~~one of the terrible things~~ those of us who say the government did wrong and this is subversive of a democratic society, "have made money". Am I to assume from this that your writing is unpaid? That you did not pay Gezzer and Moody? That their expenses came from their own pockets? Nobody paid me. No one advanced me or gave me my expenses.

But how can an honorable writer and an honorable Associated Press so assail the pillars of capitalish? Do you not fear hailing before the Un-American Committee?

Perhaps not, for you failed to mention Congressman Ford, who all of us paid to be a member of this Commission and who, with the help of a paid ghost-writing again paid by you and me- converted this assignment into the first book on the subject. He also wrote -or signed- another personal Warren Report for LIFE. He is not a "scavenger", he did not "make money". Need I recall Louis Nizer, who wrote a glowing introduction to a commercial edition of the Report at a time when the evidence was two months away from printing? Or Belinger, Schlesinger, Sorensen, Evelyn Lincoln, or the Mary of the babies, all of whom are now wealthy only because the President was murdered and they wrote of it. Of course, it is hardly possible to say of William Manchester that he is a "scavenger" or that he "made" money. He minted it, forging a national disgrace in the process. These words are hardly appropriate, addressed to him. Is this why Gezzer, Moody and the AP find no space for the above?

From time to time, as the occasion arises, I shall be commenting on this literary prostitution of yours. Because, demonstrably, my standards are higher than yours, I ask that you send me a copy of what AP distributed. Thus I can quote it without fear of editing by papers or typographical errors.

You are in numerous company today. All of you in a gangup on a few unknown authors who did your work for you when you abdicated. You will do ^{even} this only with loaded dice. I wouldn't trade places with you for anything. I believe that when a President is murdered and consigned to history with the dubious epitaph of a fake inquest, neither the country nor its institutions (including the AP) and no President are safe. I do not believe that we can have questions within the capacity of man to answer either unasked or unanswered. You do.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg